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# SONG OF A RIVER

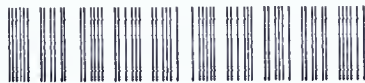
*By*

HUBERTIS M. CUMMINGS

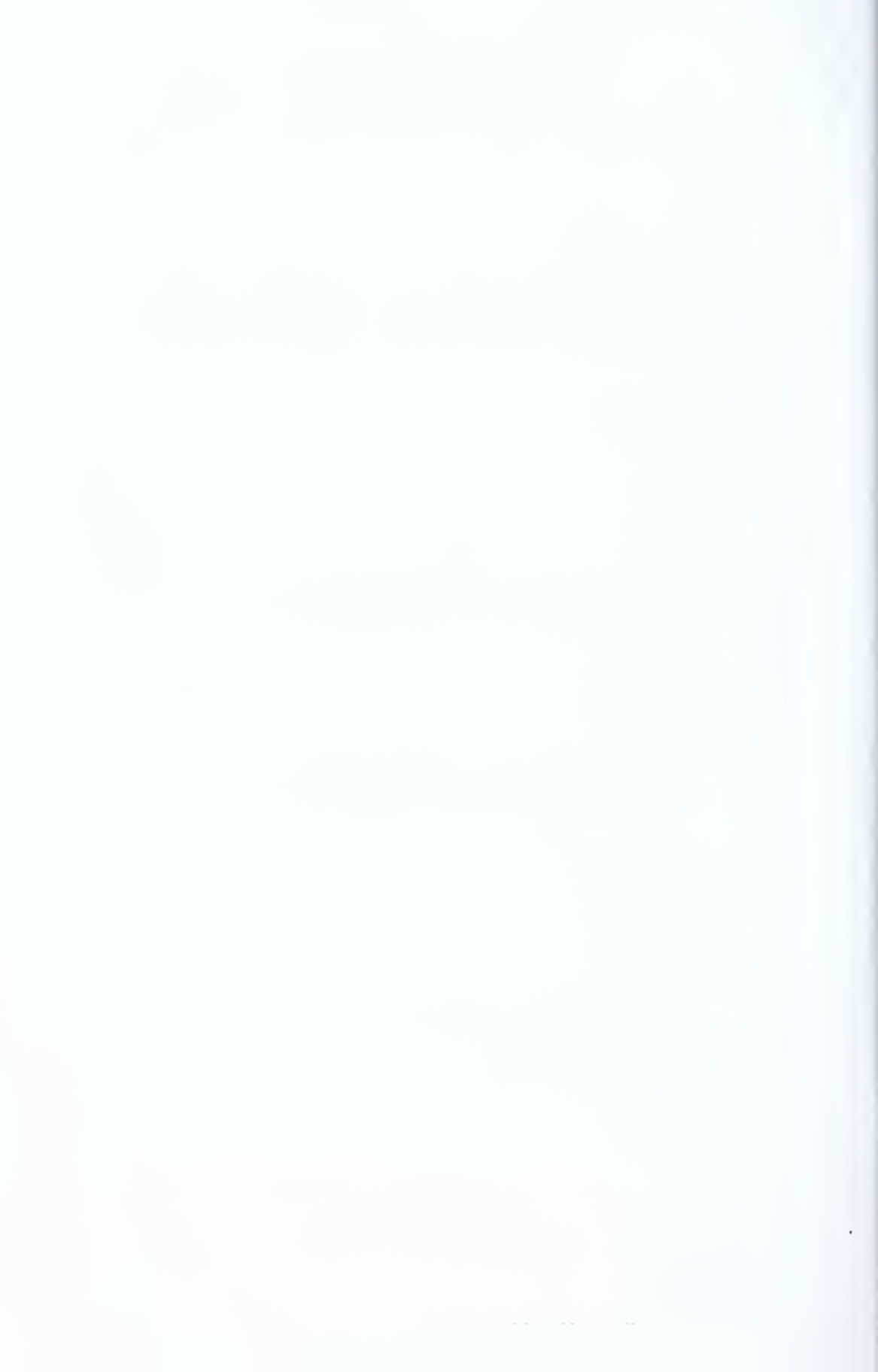
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## SONG OF A RIVER

BY HUBERTIS M. CUMMINGS

DECORATIONS BY JULIA COMSTOCK SMITH

**A**LL the story of the Susquehanna has never been told. Nor is full account of it likely to be rendered in another five hundred million years. Eras quaternary, tertiary, secondary, primary have occurred in the geological column down which its waters have figuratively moved to the sea. According to the scientific lore of the modern physical world it has been successively contemporary with periods of time palaeozoic, mesozoic, cenozoic. Geologists who venture tale of the structure of the mountains and plains whose 21,000 square miles it drains fall into a phraseology of pleistocene, pliocene, miocene, eocene, cretaceous, jurassic, triassic, and the like. Solidly they bulwark their terms with an arithmetic which makes yesterday one not with ten thousand but with anything from thirty to sixty-five million years; and in their mathematical presence the very awe of eternity descends upon the Susquehanna.

But, although geologists must begin the total narrative—and may yet have the privilege of ending it some trillion years hence—they have today no priority of right to render the human intimacies of the tale of Pennsylvania's midland river.

As living men now know the Susquehanna, it is as a stream which men of Caucasian blood saw first not so much as three-and-a-half centuries ago, and which has been an incalculable part

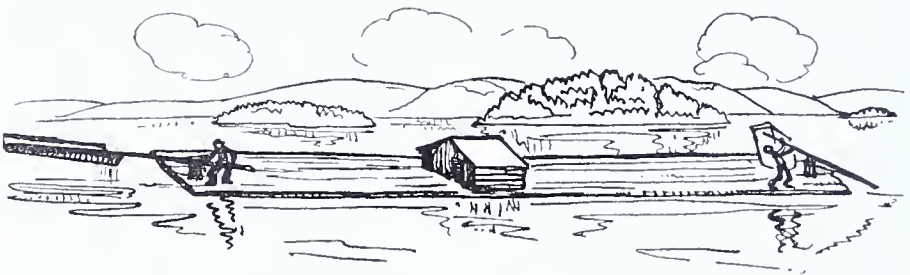
in the history of a Commonwealth which still has to wait thirty years to be itself three centuries old. The river which empties into Chesapeake Bay the waters rising from the northeast slopes of the Allegheny Plateau or from the northwest slopes of the Pocono Mountains has a relation to men's lives which is neither to be specialized in by the scientist nor to be isolated from the experiences of humankind. The agelessness of primordial dawn is no more upon it than the recent night of man's past and the morrow of his expectancy. From Captain John Smith's first glimpse of it in 1608 to the image of some tree-lined, half-sandy, half-rocky-bottomed shore of it which lingers in the memory of a boy scout falling asleep in his bunk after an August day of happy swimming in 1950—the Susquehanna has been allied closely with human endeavor and mortal delight.

Wordsworth's shepherd Michael knew as not things indifferent  
"the green valley, and the streams and rocks."

So too, however unvoiced his sentiment, the Englishman of Quaker affiliations or the Scotch-Irishman of Presbyterian rearing, ever since he set up his first rude shelter on the east bank of the Susquehanna, has felt in that river

"The pleasure which there is in life itself."

Red men who preceded the Quaker, the Quaker himself, the Scotch-Irishman, the German, Czech, Slovene, Hungarian, Austrian, Serb, Italian, Greek, have all in their generations shared in the same feeling.



Witness the conquest of the river by dugout canoe; by pioneer's heavy bateau; by raft, ark; by canal, railroad, dam, power house; by highways slicing great mountain bluffs into towering cliffs of rock and careering through deep valleys or over precipitous heights with an equal ease. Witness the triumph of man in his sawmills, mines, factories, warehouses, shops; witness the zest of man de-

nuding the forests for his own uses, emptying the bowels of Pennsylvania earth for his industry, his wealth, his trade and his fire-side. Witness the simple passion of man going into farmhouse and barn on bottom lands and slopes; into canal ports like Columbia, Portsmouth at Middletown, Millersburg, Liverpool, Port Trevorton, Selinsgrove, Sunbury, Northumberland, Lewisburg, Muncy, Lock Haven, Beach Haven, Esby Town, or Nanticoke; into mining towns like Herndon, Catawissa, Nescopeck, Nanticoke, Wilkes-Barre, and Pittston; into ironmasters' mansions and steelmasters' palaces. Witness all these in the brief, few-centuried cavalcade of life along the Susquehanna.

Then listen to the river folk of 1950, sprung from a multiplicity of race stocks, German, Scotch-Irish, Irish, Holland Dutch, Austrian, Slovene, or Pole. Into eyes blue, gray, brown, or black comes light. Lips spread in smiles. Heads cock themselves sagely. One grand-sire tells of the June flood of 1889, one of the May flood of 1894. A grandmother tells of the windstorm which sixty years ago took out two spans of a wooden bridge and left her a child at school waiting for the waters to quiet and a father to row a mile across the Clark's Ferry Dam to rescue his daughter from a second night of homesickness on the west shore.

The merchant burgess of a river town leads you elatedly to the cemetery on the hill back of the three streets of his bailiwick to show you the grave of Johnny Doyle, Irish immigrant laborer on the Pennsylvania Canal in 1828 who died of a malarial fever, as did thirty of his fellows, and was committed to earth far away from his native County Down Ballelee to become one hundred and twenty-two years later the chief memorial at Liverpool of an American enterprise which in the middle eighteen hundreds all but reduced a great Commonwealth to bankruptcy. An innkeeper at Muncy points proudly to murals in his taproom which tell the story of Captain John Brady, hero of the Revolution and victim of Indian raiders. An octogenarian interrupts his wife's narrative of her cookstove problems on a canal boat bound from Nanticoke to New York to tell you of the prowess of Captain Augustus Lynch piloting a raft through Conewago Falls. An old lady points with pride to the conch shell by the blasts of which her father announced to the tender at Mt. Patrick his approach to the lock gates with two barges and 160 tons of anthracite destined for the coal docks

of New York City. A fishmonger descants upon old shad-running years ; an angler boasts of his catch of bass ; a hunter has his yarn of wild ducks on the river.

As a herald of the spring the Wormleysburg matron calls her friends by telephone to announce that the wild swans are now resting on the Susquehanna before resuming on the morrow their farther flight north. An elderly Harrisburger points out to a stranger the house which, after the American Revolution, Senator William Maclay built for his residence, facing the river down which William had fled with his family in the summer of 1778 from perils threatening after the Massacre of Wyoming. A retired furniture manufacturer of Middletown, divided between his love for Old St. Peter's Lutheran Church and his pride in his own family's antiquity in the borough, insists not only that William Penn intended the second city of his Province to be at the mouth of the Swatara on Susquehanna, but that no better site could have been found for the Keystone State's capital city. A Columbian fifteen miles farther down stream enlarges upon the old days—before Safe Harbor and Holtwood Dams and their power houses had ever been dreamed of—when his native “burg” was the midway port for canal traffic to Philadelphia and New York, the launching port for business between eastern Pennsylvania and Pittsburgh. A professional river-coal dredger at Trevorton narrates how, after early raftsmen years, his grandfather tended the lock at Chickies below Marietta : how his father captained the canal boats *Betsy* and *Mary*



from Nanticoke on many a voyage along the Susquehanna to the Bay, across the peninsula to the Delaware, up that second river and the Raritan Canal to Amboy ; how his sons are making their living from the old waters as venders of “power” coal.

A clear-eyed, ruddy skinned eighty-three-year oldster at modern Shamokin Dam stops his account of a raftsmen's adventure in 1895 to say, “Yes, sir, we got those logs down from Buffalo Creek above Lewisburg past Shamokin, and Clark's, and the Conewago Falls, and into the basins at Chickies ; and if you want to know anything

about the Bogars, you stop in at any of the planing mills around Harrisburg, and ask how many of my kin are still in the lumber business. What's born in the blood'll come out in the bone."

The Perry County Historical Society meets annually on the oak-shaded borough lawn of New Buffalo and, with river in sight, listens to accounts of pioneer forbears in the very theater of their ancient affection and prowess. Port Trevortonians thrill to the August afternoon on which The Pennsylvania Canal Boatmen, today the youngest of them being septuagenarians, meet on their beloved riverside in annual convention to exchange once more pet anecdotes of boating years, or with rapt eagerness to drink in an honored guest's lecture on the epic past of the old artificial waterway whose dry channel stretches along the riverside hidden by maples and locust trees.

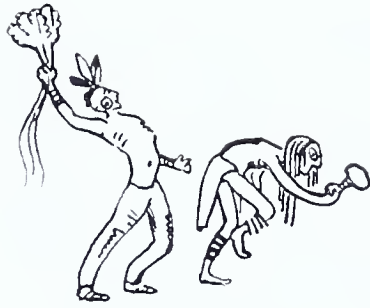
A river of challenge and memories—a current which flows no more between its banks of willows and water birches than it dwells in the hearts of simple God fearing folk—familiar of trapper, trader, missionary, soldier, logger, laborer, farmer, miller, arkman, bridge-builder, merchant, and legislator—companion, friend, and enemy of man.

If it is all this today, so was it in 1745, when David Brainerd came missionarying to Indians settled on its shores and islands. That impassioned mystic and saint, earlier expelled from Yale College for having said Tutor Whittlesey had no more of grace in him than a chair, witnessed in trembling dismay ceremonies which men in the mid-twentieth century would travel a thousand miles to see at Taos or Santa Fe. In the past spring the Indians on that island at the mouth of the Juniata River had been friendly to him. Now in late September their pagan hearts were set upon a great sacrifice and dance.

Through the day, indifferent to him, they prepared.

"In the evening they met together, nearly a hundred of them, and danced around a large fire, having made ready ten fat deer for the sacrifice. The fat of the inwards they burnt in the fire while they were dancing, and sometimes raised the flame to a prodigious height; at the same time yelling and shouting in such a manner that they might easily have been heard two miles or more. They continued their sacred dance nearly all night, after which they ate the flesh of the sacrifice, and so retired each one to his own lodging."





All that joyous ceremonial ecstasy, beautifully pictured as might have been an Homeric hecatomb! And the twenty-seven-year-old representative of the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge stood back in solitary grief at their idolatrous revel. When it ended he crept, pained and oppressed in body and spirit, "into a little crib made for corn and slept there on the poles."

Next day was the Lord's Day, but vain were his attempts on the holy morning to instruct his Indian friends. Again they were bent on other pursuits than hearing the Gospel. Rather than that, they "gathered together all their powwows, or conjurers, and set about half a dozen of them playing their juggling tricks." He knew now that their celebration was designed that it might drive off an epidemic of fever and bloody flux which had been troubling them. Yet there was no sympathy in him for their distracted motions, their singing, their howling. They extended their hands to the utmost stretch, and spread all their fingers "to push something away, or at least keep it off at arm's end." They stroked their faces with their hands. They spurted water from their lips "fine as mist." They sat flat on the earth, bowed their faces to the ground, wrung their sides, twisted their faces, turned up their eyes. They chanted, peeped, muttered with warmth and vigor, some of them more fervent and devout in the business than others.

All the while David Brainerd stood Bible in hand, not more than thirty feet from them, resolute "to spoil their sport and prevent their receiving any answers from the infernal world." Through the three hours of their charms and incantations he kept himself undiscovered, and uninterrupted. At the end of that time his Christian heart rejoiced that they had received no answer at all; and thereupon he attempted discourse with the Juniata Indians upon his own faith.

It was in vain, however, he "named the name of Christ." All that he could do on that Sabbath Day was to enter in his journal descriptions of customs from which his soul recoiled in utter disillusionment. And on the next day he made another distressful entry, recording that his missionary labors had been to no purpose. Moreover, he added of that island—near which were the trading posts of English John Harris, Scotch-Irish Thomas McKee, James Berry, and the Armstrong brothers—that the Indians "live so near the white people that they are always in the way of strong liquor, as well as of the ill examples of *nominal* Christians; which renders it unspeakably difficult to treat with them about Christianity."

That ancient tribal customs of the Shawnees might have had even more weight in their religion, as they danced and chanted, than bad whiskey seems not to have occurred to the pious young Calvinist. Lost wholly on him was the magical firelight with red bodies moving rhythmically within it on what has since been known as Haldeman's Island.

Brainerd had no anthropological interests. Rousseau's noble savage, *l'homme naturel*, and his romantic beauty and goodness were still uncurrent concepts in 1745; and two centuries later Indian *mores* have utterly vanished from Susquehanna waters.

But that latter truth may fit well enough into the history of a great watershed from whose banks a myriad of other spectacles have dissolved or like Prospero's "unsubstantial pageant" faded.

For always the Susquehanna has had something of Shelley's "West Wind" in it. It has long been both destroyer and preserver. Neither aborigine's nor white man's conquest of it has been final. As from it the Indian's dance and song have receded, so too have perished within the last century works on which Pennsylvania citizens built whole chapters of their public and economic faith. The craft of the engineer and the architect has been as evanescent and gossamer-like in its frailty as the Indian's hand-gesturing appeals to the spirits which he thought ruled his world.

Bridges, canals, railroads have vanished as completely as Indian paths have been lost from valley and hill.

From the great Holtwood Dam on the lower Susquehanna to Otsego Lake, origin of the North Branch in New York State, is scarce a day's journey by motor car. But between those two points

let no modern expect to see much of the greatest things men built between them a century or a century-and-a-half ago.

Pennsylvania in 1809 passed an Act for the structure of turn-pikes and bridges in the Commonwealth, and within seven more years the expert Theodore Burr of Connecticut had added to the laurels of his bridge building on the Hudson and the Delaware a record of five arch-and-truss wooden covered bridges across the Susquehanna.

The structures completed by him before 1816 would make fame for Columbia, Harrisburg, Northumberland, and Berwick—and each prove both story and myth in itself. Most brilliant of all his feats was the bridge of single span 364-feet long, with the chord line of its arch 367 feet, which rested upon one stone abutment and one pier and crossed the entire breadth of the Susquehanna at its narrowest gorge-like channel just above McCall's Ferry and twenty miles below Columbia.

Burr's own boast was that the long double arch was the greatest in the world. Erection of it on floats ranging the shore below the earlier built abutment and lying on water which soundings had shown was often 160 feet deep was the magnificently patient and skillful labor of ten weeks. Turning it from its lengthwise position up-and-down-stream along the shore athwart the river between abutment and pier was a marvel in engineering and superintendence which could be achieved finally only after the forming of a dense and complete surface of ice over the swift current in the freezing January of 1815.

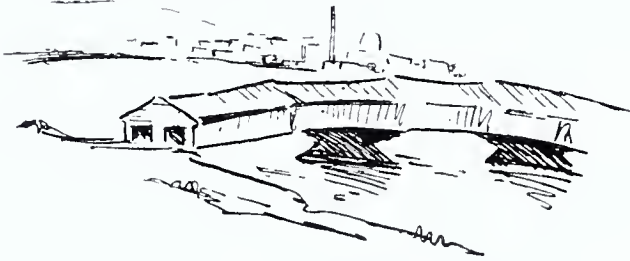
Burr and his men executed that miracle; and the fourth of his bridges crossed the Susquehanna to connect Lancaster and York Counties, accommodating a 30-foot roadway. Another ninth wonder of the world had been accomplished!

But ice, without the aid of which it could not have been performed, was not to be the enduring friend of the structure. Three years of glory the great double arch had, proud of its 31-foot rise, its king-posts, truss-braces, and counteracting braces, beautiful to look on, serviceable to man. Then block piled upon ice block, floe upon floe, accumulating almost to iceberg proportions in the ever narrowing McCall's Ferry gorge. On March 3, 1818, the frozen pyramid drove on Theodore Burr's masterpiece. Pier and abutment succumbed. Into the mad choked swirl of the Susque-



hanna crashed the vaunted titanism of bridge architecture. What remained afterwards was but a memory growing ever more and more dim. Today even the shores from which the arched span plunged into ruin are submerged fifty feet deep under the surface of vast, power-generating Holtwood Dam.

Burr's bridge at Columbia survived the McCall's Ferry structure for fourteen years, then broke in a flood. Four more years, and the force of ice and water ended his plank-piered bridge between Berwick and Nescopee. Flood and hurricane did for the two parts of his stone-piered Northumberland Bridge in 1839 and 1846. Half his bridge at Harrisburg was destroyed in the great freshet of March in that latter year, and had to be rebuilt on a new plan; the half between Forster's Island and the west shore had a far longer life, escaping the menace of the Civil War.



But the passing of the five Burr bridges is hardly more than symbolic of changing times and cultures along the Susquehanna. The all-things-in-flow (πάντα ῥεῖ) philosophy of the Greek Heraclitus holds apt beside that river course. As the turnpike bridges have gone, so too have vanished the Pennsylvania Canal towing-path bridges set up decades later at Clark's Ferry, Northumberland, and Towanda; and the sturdier railroad bridges, built by William Milnor Roberts for the Cumberland Valley Railroad, by John Edgar Thomson for the Pennsylvania, by Anthony B. Warford for the old Northern Central. In 1870 disappeared the wooden arch-and-truss combined railroad and highway bridge of the Trevorton and Susquehanna Railroad Company which for fifteen years had carried anthracite coal descending from mines at the head of Mahanoy Creek over the river to fill canal boats at Port Trevorton, and post them on waterway routes to Baltimore or New York.

The phrase *mutabile mutandis* applies to the Long Crooked River as it applies to nature and man. Here three, here four lonely

and broken piers project from the river bed as forlorn monuments of transient engineering greatness. Other times, other feats, other decay and disaster, other eclipsings by new achievements in technique.

The era of canal building came. Along the Susquehanna mile by mile from Columbia to Athens the Pennsylvania Canal ascended, crossing from east shore to west at Clark's Ferry; paralleling the river on the west shore to opposite Northumberland; crossing to pass through that town and ascend on the west bank of the North Branch to West Nanticoke; crossing again to enter Wilkes-Barre and ascend to the mouth of Lackawanna Creek, to Tunkhannock, Meshoppen, Wyalusing, Wysox; and finally, once more seeking the west bank at Towanda, taking its placid way north to the New York State Line.

In the thirty years between 1826 and 1856 nearly a hundred stone locks came into being. Half a hundred stone aqueducts carried the artificial waterway over streams entering the river from Chickiesalunga Creek below Marietta to Sugar Creek above Towanda. Great dams at Clark's Ferry, Shamokin, Nanticoke, Lackawanna, Mehoopany, Towanda, and Athens, halted the current to form pools of water for feeding the off-shore canalways. A noble system for transportation, intended to bring Pennsylvania forward into a magnificent, lasting destiny of hope, cheer, and fortune.

And where now are those Public Works which were expected to perform for the Commonwealth what the beautiful, often non-navigable, Susquehanna could not itself do?

A dozen *débris-and-garbage-filled* liftlocks at Rockville, at Speeceville, at Montgomery's Ferry, at Mount Patrick, above Liverpool, at Port Trevorton, above Northumberland, at West Nanticoke remain only. Surviving are the piers of an occasional aqueduct, all its water-carrying trunk and superstructure gone: at Chickiesalunga Creek, at Swatara Creek, at Clark's, at West Mahantango, at Fishing Creek southwest of Bloomsburg. Of the great system's costly dams, pride of the most expert engineers of their day, only Clark's Ferry in the mid-twentieth century offers enough to the view of the spectator on the river bank for him to realize that an artificial barrier is stemming the current.

And with the passing of all have disappeared likewise the subtly built raft chutes, constructed by a beneficent State at the side

of every dam in order that there might be no interruption to the industry of skilled and fearless raftsmen guiding the timber wealth of the forests between Bald Eagle and Buffalo Creeks down the West Branch and down the Susquehanna, past islands, over falls, to Southern Pennsylvania and Maryland.

For after the canal came the railroad, prompt—wherever and whenever the waterway failed—to fill its ditch, lay tracks above that, pre-empt the canal's services as a carrier, and smile on its too obvious incapacities.

Bleak thought, perhaps, that not one aqueduct pier remains at the creek mouths from Lackawanna, to Buttermilk, Tunkhannock, Meshoppen, Wyalusing, Wysox, Sugar across the North Branch, to tell the story of the North Branch Extension Canal. It cost more than four-and-a-half million dollars; because of postponements, was twenty years in building; and an ice flood in 1865 gave it the *coup de grace* after a paltry seven years of use. Today you might count on your ten fingers the sections of tow-path which still show at North Pennsylvania villages.

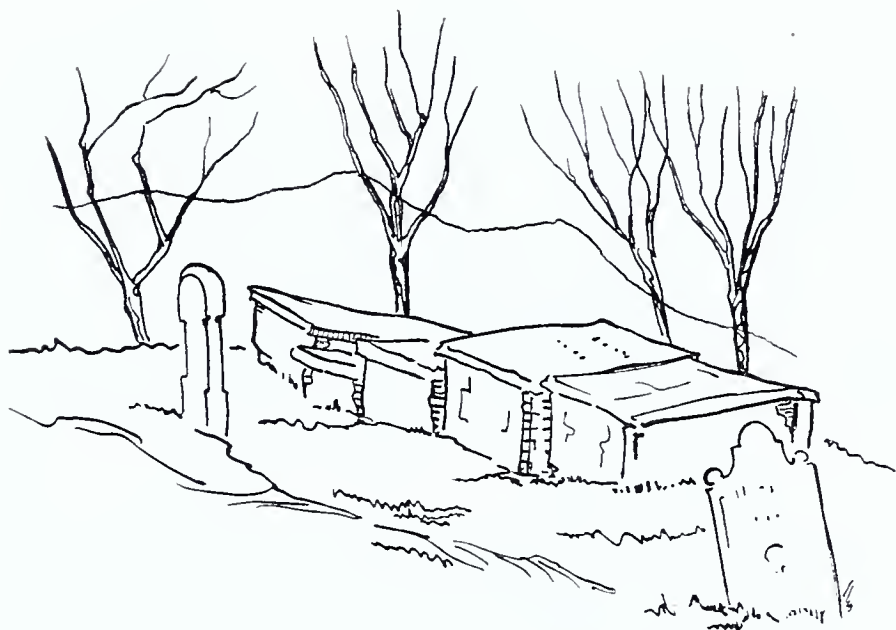
But for the modern traveler the tale is not unbearably sad. Far above the riverside latter-day highways speeds the motorist from Towanda to Wyalusing Rocks. His drive parallels the unseen canal—and an unseen railroad—below. He is not hemmed in by close forests, brooding on the narrow spaces which grudging mountains have left for a canal between their bases and the river, his packet boat or barge moving northwards in gloomy shadow. Rather, with motor engine purring soft and contented, he ascends effortlessly a broad asphalt road which has dared to shear away Rummelfield Mountain to make easy his transit. Lofty green slopes have turned for him into brown cliffs. From where eagles only could have looked on the North Branch Susquehanna he gazes down on that river and falls to marveling. To the west lie the valleys of Sugar and Towanda Creeks. When he reaches the Rocks, he grows suddenly akin to that explorer whom John Keats once described as  
“Silent upon a peak in Darien.”

What he “watches” is a river winding away through woodland and field. Elms skirt ploughed land and meadow so far below him they seem but curving lines of alders and brush following the channels. A few farmhouses and barns dot the landscape. The ribbons of a handful of roads parallel or intersect one another. Then

the slopes beyond climb into hills. The hills roll into mountains and ever more mountains. Champaign and uplands are beautiful, whether verdant under blue sky and drifting thunderheads, or snow-filled under a graying heaven, or bare and brown beneath clouds moving low and leaden. From that western tip of the Wyalusing Hills what one sees is almost Paradise. Little matter, indeed, that a guide book advises the traveler that in the pastoral vale below him French *émigrés* once planned a *grande maison* for a Queen who was never to hear of it. Little matter, perhaps, the paths of death for an unknowing lady, when a river grows itself into the very embodiment of romance.

For an elusive, ever mutable, and happily indestructible beauty always attends on the Susquehanna. The history of man along its course borrows from, rather than lends to, its quality. The river itself is the power. The rocky floor of its channel near Maryland long ago told Pennsylvania legislators how to have the great trade of the central counties not for Baltimore but for Philadelphia. Precipitous banks there, with forests packed close on the brink of the waters, told man to keep his roads away from the streamside. A stern and indiscriminant nature chose her woods there for herself and kept them an inviolable preserve for the most luxuriant cascades of mountain laurel to be found in early summer among all the hillsides of the Commonwealth. No ocean-going sloops or brigs descending to the Bay there; only a scattering of hamlets, a few creek mouths; then the modern great dams of Safe Harbor and Holtwood, curbing the Susquehanna which nature and legislators kept non-navigable, but using her power to operate machines in a thousand factories, furnish light to half a million homes, and drive all the trains which move on five hundred and fifty track miles of Pennsylvania's railways.

And, up the river from the dams on the bluffs overlooking the broad current, Indian burial grounds, within and back from Washington Boro, still telling to archaeologists their story of Susquehannocks and Conestogas—and, in contrast, Mt. Bethel Cemetery in Columbia with its proud box-tombs of marble bespeaking the century-old patricianhood of townsfolk whose modest Quaker forbears lie near by in unmarked graves, men who gave Wright's Ferry its name and served the children of William Penn well. Down in the valley from that equivocal sanctuary of the dead the

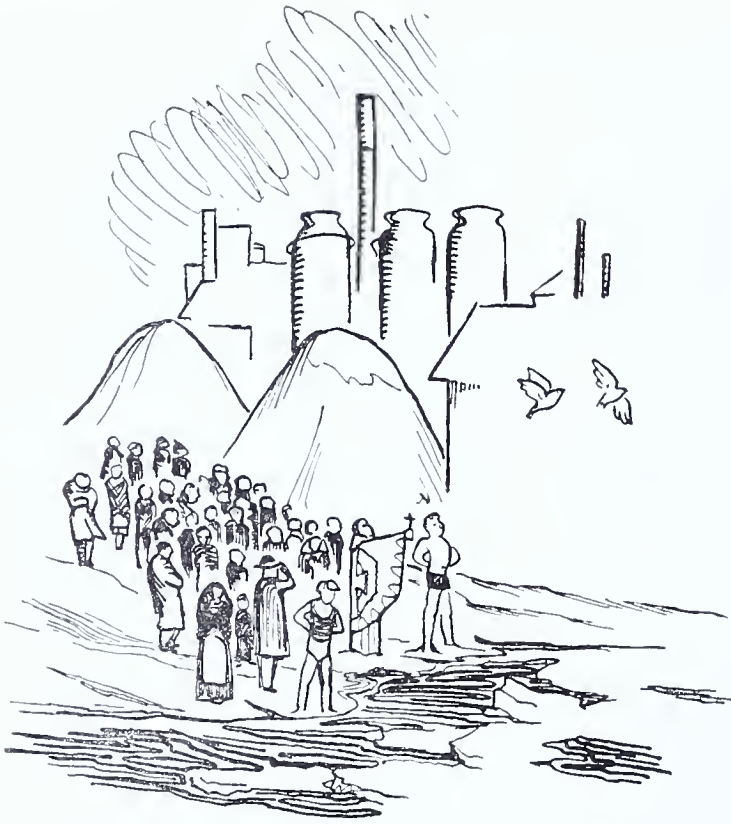


modern four-laned bridge of concrete now replacing the earlier covered wooden bridge between Columbia and Wrightsville which citizens burned in 1863 lest it become the way of Lee's army to Philadelphia. On from memories of the intervening Battle of Gettysburg which saved Pennsylvania and the North from the Confederates; and the haunt of hikers and picnickers looms into prospect! Towering Chickies Rock looks down over wild and untamed mountains to the south and west, affording view of as broad an expanse of blue water as a summer day can offer along the Susquehanna anywhere, declaring to the thoughtful observer the source of all the dynamism of Holtwood and Safe Harbor.

Lost from sight along the base of that Rock, five iron furnaces which in canal days were great and flourishing, whose foundation stones today lie scarcely one on the other, while swift new forests cover all traces—and lost, just upstream from these, the myriad-filled log ponds in which raftsmen and sawyers for a century delighted.

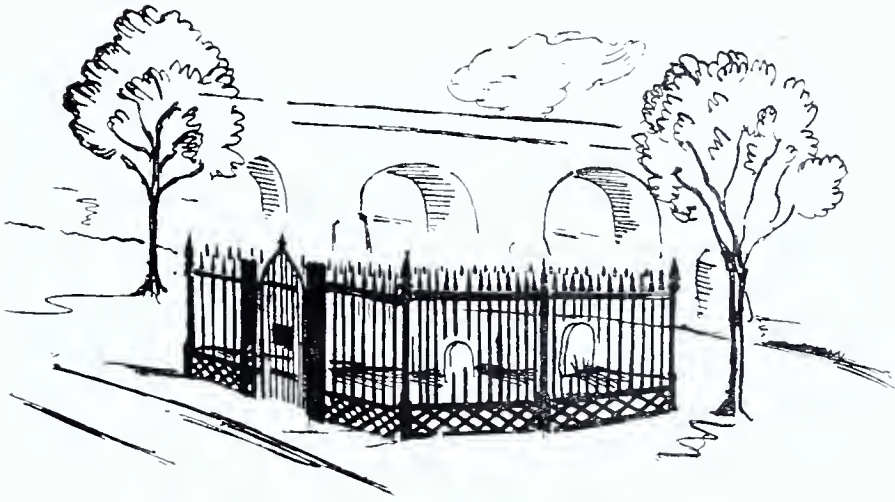
Then memory-proud Marietta, Bainbridge, and Falmouth; and, after them, Middletown, which in more recent years has forgotten canal days to revel in the varied wonders of modern airport activity. Across the river, above that borough, a new turnpike bridge coming, almost on the line of old Simpson's Ferry, link in a highway





which is to approach Philadelphia along a route which Indian paths had all but marked out before William Penn founded that city! After that bridge, industrial Steelton, home of a great successively owned steel company, its hillside population numbering many a family of foreign-born parents and its Serbian Orthodox Church pouring out, on the Julian Calendar date of the Epiphany in mid-January, a procession of worshippers to make their way down past high dark mills and smoking stacks to the riverside and perform their ceremony of baptizing the Cross—a pious and holy rite signifying to them not only the appearance of the three Kings out of the East but also the coming of Christ to the Jordan for the beginning of His mission on Earth and for His acceptance of that course which would lead Him to Calvary and mankind's redemption. Then, minus all colorful Eastern ecclesiastical pageantry, industrial South Harrisburg with other iron and steel works, blazing furnaces, the whirr of shafts and the clangor of machinery.

Presently, upstream from these, the riverbank grave of the



pioneer Ferryman John Harris; and, onwards from it, the river-front park of the Capital City, stately in elms, maples, and oaks, with the stridently elegant houses of nineteenth-century industrialists opposite, now every day preening themselves more as the offices of lawyers as skilled in protecting the rights of corporations as they are in estimating the incomes of the directors of these against Federal taxation—or dignifying, mayhap, with their aristocratic venerableness the humbler, but as indispensable, profession of insurance brokers.

Above Harrisburg unimpaired charm and picturesqueness for the river.

A bend to the right, and into the prospect comes a broad body of water—an amphitheatre, as it were, with a lake for its orchestra floor and five even-topped mountains providing the tiers of its circus beneath a vastitude of sky. The Susquehanna Gap is sheer delight for the eye in any hour of day or night. The arches of the four-tracked Pennsylvania Railroad stone bridge, stretching from shore to shore, become a scalloped and inverted bar in a border which separates the white, the gray, the blue, the silver, the gold of water from a giant backdrop of hills changing in hue and intensity with every transient minute of light. The west and the east flanks of Blue Mountain offer a perspective between them of Cove Mountain and Second Mountain; and those two guardians reveal Peters Mountain closing the horizon beyond. All five wooded slopes convey sensitively the marvels of rain, snow, dawn, sunset.

spring, summer, autumn, and winter—with man's feat in a bridge foregrounding their beauty. Green hills in summer boundarying blue water under a serene midday sky; slate gray ridges over a surface of dull silver in an April morning of rain; brown slopes of early November intermitted with the fading yellow of tulip poplars or maples, with green wheat fields at their base toward the water; purple slopes of frozen December, with only evergreens breaking the oneness of their color; golden slopes in chill January when an afternoon sun performs its miracle on them and the snow which lies beneath the trees covering them—all these, and more, play their subtle enchantments on the material being of the Susquehanna as her Gap opens the gateway to the north in Pennsylvania.

Above the Gap, as below it, a lake. At the side of this, highway markers telling of a pioneer fort. Then the old Paxton (now Dauphin) Narrows; and at the head of these the century-old house of the Honorable Innis Green, facing from the north that Gap by which his forbears ascended the river hopeful to conquer it, facing the ghosts of a canal which was to carry his mill-products to market, facing the railroad and the highways which have stripped his mansion of every vestige of its four-square grandeur. The Borough of Dauphin then, with its high-spired Presbyterian Church, chaste and lovely in its whiteness as any famous New England colonial sanctuary.



On to modern Clark's Ferry Bridge, across it and up river through the canal towns: New Buffalo, with its memories of boat-yards; Montgomery's Ferry, where the shore opens upon the green bluffs of three great eastern ridges; Liverpool, former home of



canal boat captains, with green lawns and roses in June covering old towpaths; Port Trevorton, summer Mecca for all nostalgic lovers of boatman days; Selinsgrove, where once boatyards fringed the Isle of Que, where houses excel in stateliness and carved entrances, and where every roof vies with another in the uniqueness of its "snow birds"; Shamokin Dam where the vast installations of the Pennsylvania Power and Light Company dwarf every achievement formerly rendered and boasted by that water barrier in the Susquehanna which gave the town its name in old days, which was expected to supply the State-owned canal with water enough to take it down to Clark's Ferry—and which too often disappointed expectations.

Over the West Branch into Northumberland, where the eminence of the English scientist and philosopher Joseph Priestley outrivals today not only the old importance of a canal port and junction but the celebrity of those Scotch-Irish heroes of the American Revolution who left "the Point" in 1775 and 1776 to help Washington in the days of beginning and in the years of bitterness from Long Island to Valley Forge. Up the West Branch, with Blue Hill across the river and presently Lewisburg, city of aristocratic streets, old mansions, a famous college, and lawns which descend to the riverside with a charm to be matched only in the provincial towns of England—these where once the banks were covered with sawmills, along waters where raftsmen formed their five-sectioned crafts of logs for down Susquehanna. From opposite Lewisburg on to Milton and Watsontown, with views ever and anon of White Deer and White Deer Hole Mountains on the west, and with reflections of Northumberland legislators who went from the neighborhood of them to share in Pennsylvania's framing of her Constitution of 1776. From the two towns which the lumber industry made fair and prosperous on to Muncy; and from there northeastwards and then northwards by three valleys and a hundred miles of travel from the West Branch to the North Branch at Towanda, over a great divide lying in the forks of the Susquehanna.

A drive through Muncy Valley with the sun-bathed Muncy Hills to the southeast; along the headwaters of Loyalsock Creek, with an angler here fly-fishing for trout, a crew of lumbermen there by a hillside loading motor trucks with logs that in old days would have traveled by water to sawmills; northwards by roads

lined with red maples whose first breaking buds glow into a crimson radiance at the touch of sun, contrasting with sombre beech forests on wintry uplands, where color shows only in the pale tan, paper-thin remnants of last autumn's leaves, or in an occasional interspersed cluster of aspen trees, yellow green in their bark, with silver-green catkins lengthening in early April. Then onwards by the north bank of Towanda Creek into Towanda, city holding in honor the quiet grave of David Wilmot, author and proponent of the famous anti-slavery "Proviso," storm-center once in county, commonwealth and nation; city of beautiful porticoed mansions, their lofty trees and green lawns retreating austere from a business district where the motor horn shrieks and the neon sign advertises the life of modernity; city of command on the North Branch—with no rival on that river save leafy-avenued Athens, twenty-odd miles to the north of it, serene and sedate in its every memory of historic Tioga Point, on a riverside where traditions of Queen Esther's Town and Sullivan's March linger and where beauty of landscape still dominates.



Then down stream again, across the bridge from Towanda to the east bank, and three miles to Wysox where lonely and bold on the view stands the cupola'd mansion of Colonel Victor Emile Piolet, volcanically French, rigidly Puritan and Presbyterian, wealthiest farmer and squire of the township, son of a father who drew honorable wounds on himself fighting with Napoleon at Austerlitz, politician, canal superintendent, employer and friend once of David Wilmot, later unrelenting foe of that statesman—his empty house now more useful for storage than residence, and its affluent builder's memory dying. To the eastwards and southwards; but, unseen now by either old time canaller or modern day motorist, that pillar-like Standing Stone which long ago gave

its name to rich arable flats and a township and which yet towers in lonely splendor by the riverside.

From meditations on transient celebrity there and on monuments of permanence here up the side of Rummelfield Mountain, where are hemlocks and pines alternating with beeches, more aspens, and—happily—silver birches. Past Wyalusing Rocks, down from one's view of Paradise into Wyalusing Village, where a queen who was never there is remembered, and where an Indian town which was there—in 1763 quite to the wrath of the Reverend Mr. John Elder of Paxton—now is forgotten. Where soon will be forgotten the wood carver and cabinet maker whose passion, in a hamlet which was more nearly wilderness than citadel of culture, impelled him to give to every house-front which he touched the exquisiteness of carving



in panel, window frame, door post, and cornice which graced during Renaissance centuries the houses of Chester in England or of Frankfurt in Germany—ornament in hyperbole, skill in apotheosis, art of a visitant to the North Branch as romantic as any Indian precursor.

Southwards by roads across glens, through dales, along uplands, shadowed again by red maples, by willows in young leaf, hemlocks still deep in their winter green, or white birches waiting a few more days of sun to quicken their buds into wispy silver green catkins; more beech trees and aspens; then a high valley of the gods, its vista closed and exalted against a late morning sky by a mountain as rugged and gigantic as it is blue.

Down from its declivities into Tunkhannock on the North Branch, a borough of wide streets, noble trees, deep lawns, and commodious houses all trying to emulate the beauty of the mountain environment of which they are the municipal center.

For, humanly considered, the Susquehanna River is the mother of towns. Pittston, West Pittston, Wyoming, Forty Fort, Luzerne, Kingston, and Wilkes-Barre cling to her side on right or left as the North Branch descends: multitudinous, residential, industrial peers in their sturdy vitality of any enterprise, bridge, dam, or power house ever attempted by man between or along her shores! About all is the epic of anthracite, in later chapters now than those which sounded the fame of boats carrying their coal farther down on the Pennsylvania Canal through Nanticoke and West Nanticoke; through mountainbacked Shickshinny; Beach Haven, where for fifty years all cargoes stopped for the Weighlock; Berwick, where iron furnaces once rivaled coal mines, fair inland city today; Espy Town, where for long years flourished boatyards without whose products the canal would have been empty of craft; Bloomsburg, on lordly heights, gazing from hills of learning far south to river and mountains; Danville, aloof and fair, its quiet streets lined with oak and elm, its famous Geisinger Hospital making its slopes proud and beneficent; then, southwards of Montour Ridge, Northumberland, where North Branch and West Branch meet, old borough but not slumbering.

Across the North Branch from it, a half mile south, and there stands another city. Sunbury, long ago laid out for the Penns as a manor, earlier than that Fort Augusta, and still earlier Shamokin, is as much the daughter of Susquehanna as any. But too often disturbed by her mother's caprices, too often flooded by sudden waters, the town which young William Maclay surveyed before the American Revolution has grown cautious. Studiedly she retires today back of a two-mile-long wall of concrete, keeping safe from maternal moods, but hiding the river from travelers and robbing fair Blue Hill of its foreground. Security for her environs is bought, as is all security elsewhere, at a price.

Happier than Sunbury is Herndon, fifteen miles to the south, a miners' village without sight of mines. Its one long street hugs the bluff of a mountain. Its houses are all clean-painted, high, and flood-proof. Its back windows open on an idyllic prospect of island, river, Port Trevorton opposite, and western hills that roll towards sunset.

Yet Herndon's serene position is hardly more than a preface to grandeur. To find their way below that borough the roads must

turn back from the river into the hills, leading past farms and uplands, by ploughed fields which border winter wheat, green wheat-fields which border brown hilltop forests intervaled with spruces and pines, and hilltops which hold up the sky.

By inspiration they lead also to Dalmatia, once Georgetown, where miracles of landscape begin. Sunrise in the spring of the year sends silver flakes of light across the water to islands, and the first shoots of willows or river birches turn into pale mists of luminous green. Midday in summer discovers verdure rich, lush, and primeval under a burning sky, omen inviting rains to turn the Susquehanna into slatecolored waters and winds to toss tree-branches in fury. Evening in autumn converts mid-channel islands into silhouettes of purple-black velvet beyond white-gray waters, in front of mountains as dark, and under a silver sky. A clear freezing winter morning reveals an ice-stopped channel; black trunks of willows, tan-and-white spotted trunks of river-birches rising from a floor of snow; and, beyond the Susquehanna, mountain slopes of russet and soft purple tipped at their crests with green conifers.

Nothing but what is beautiful farther down stream. The highway south, cut around the lofty head of Mahantango Mountain, bears by cliffs and woods to the left, and unparalleled river views to the right, presently with Mount Patrick towering above the western shore into a peak which smites you with wonder. Its symmetrical cone—it is really a headland—green in broad day, blue-black at night, refuses to leave your meditations until you have passed through superbly placed Millersburg and rounded the cliffs of Berry's Mountain to catch sight of Peters. You forget it then only to revel in an equal magnificence.

Into view, out of view, passes that great fourth mountain of the Blue Ridge. A lane of sycamores, beautiful as a road of plane trees in sunny Provence, guides you into Halifax; and another lane of sycamores guides you away. You are back with Peters Mountain. There is its western face, cut into a stern cliff with forests rising precipitous above, monarch of Cove Valley, giant louring down on a lake-like river and the works of the modern road engineer. To it Clark's Valley Bridge, successor to that towpath bridge which, in 1828 and Pennsylvania Canal days, was designed that it might bind a Commonwealth into one unity of trade, is nothing. It will



be there as long as the river is there. Bridges, dams, and roads pass. The Susquehanna River remains. What matter that David Brainerd's soul was troubled by Shawnee Indian dances by fire-light on the island opposite to Peters in 1745. What matter that rumors from that island sent Scotch-Irishmen of Paxton into those raids of late December, 1763, which destroyed at Conestoga and Lancaster the last of the Susquehannocks. What matter that a pioneer Scotch-Irish family settled the valley below Peters, gave the valley their name; and passed themselves—as have passed other men of their ilk—into the shadows of history!

